

Postal Regulatory Commission
Office of the Chairman

July 12, 2011

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POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Commissioner Ruth Goldway

Chairman

Postal Regulatory Commission

901 New York Avenue NW, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20268-0001

A 2011-29

Re: Bigelow Post Office – Bigelow, Arkansas

Dear Commissioner Goldway:

The Postal Service has informed us of a decision to close our post office by August 1, 2011. This action is being taken after meeting the provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, and over our protestations.

We, the customers of the Bigelow Post Office, vigorously protest this action, in view of the provision in the Postal Reorganization Act that calls for the Postal Service to provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal service to rural areas, communities and small towns where the post office is not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit (emphasis mine), it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities.

In the Final Determination letter, section IV Economic Savings (see attached), it lists the postmaster salary, fringe benefits, annual lease costs, and annual cost of replacement service. This is not a full disclosure of all expenses and savings. The postmaster's salary is listed at the highest possible value. The cost of replacement service is not high enough to pay for additional salary and mileage to current carriers and also to hire an additional carrier as mentioned at the public meetings with the Postal Service. The loss of revenue from the post office is not figured in, affecting the total annual savings.

Also, stated by the Postal Service as a reason for closure was the postmaster position was vacant. This job was not posted and therefore the Postal Service has not made an effort to fill this vacancy for the past year.

You have a lot of elderly and disabled customers in Bigelow and the surrounding area serviced by this post office. Closing this post office would place a great hardship on these people because of the financial burden of traveling a greater distance to a facility to take care of their business such as mailing packages, buying stamps & boxes, etc. Going to the post office is a way of life in rural communities to talk with a local postmaster, visit with patrons and local officials, to learn of community events and news not always found in newspapers or on the radio. This keeps rural areas informed and strong which keeps this country strong and our post office is at the center of this heartbeat.

The Postal Service's decision to consolidate our post office with the Conway Post Office is being done over our objections. We will not have a postmaster to whom we can take our problems, complaints and compliments. We will be directed to a distant postmaster in the home office of our station. This will mean the loss of our identity as a community. If you travel through rural areas all over this country the one friendly constant are their post offices. It is more than our identity it is an emblem of pride.

Our local businesses and municipalities have concerns about mailing packages, documents, and other forms of business in a timely manner that is dictated by business activities that may not coincide with the carrier's schedule. Traveling to and from Conway's Post Office several times each day would cause a financial burden, on our community and your customers, which could be devastating to Bigelow.

The East End School System expressed concern over the large amount of mail they receive, sometimes five to eight bins of mail per day, and also the large amount of mail sent from the schools. The discontinuance of the Bigelow Post Office would place undue hardship on the faculty and teachers who have the important task of educating our children. The backbone of this town and the future of our country.

One of the Postal Service representative's statements was that it could not afford the rent increase on the current facilities, which was in the original agreement. The local owners of the property stated, in a letter to the post office, that they would leave the rent at the current rate with no increase. This agreement would cost the property owners \$200,000.00 over the next fifteen years but they are more concerned with keeping Bigelow's Post Office open.

Postal Service employees have stated, at public meetings, that Bigelow was not placed on the list to close until negotiations on the scheduled rent increase became heated. The decision to close Bigelow's Post Office should not be based upon rent negotiations. Discontinuance of the Bigelow Post Office will put a great hardship on our entire community.

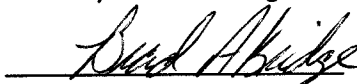
Little Rock is the state capital and it is expanding rapidly into the Bigelow area. Conway is the

fastest growing city in the state and the growth is coming west to Bigelow. Conway is currently building a new airport that is on property adjacent to the area currently serviced by the Bigelow Post Office. With this kind of growth in this area the need for a post office will be growing exponentially.

We feel that, as citizens of the United States, we are entitled to the same efficient postal service provided to our counterparts in urban areas. The Postal Reorganization Act is explicit in pointing this out. We petition you, as members of the Postal Regulatory Commission, to respectfully consider our protest and order the Postal Service to give additional considerations to our service needs.

Respectfully,

Mayor Brad Akridge

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brad Akridge", is written over a horizontal line.

P.O. Box 177

Bigelow, AR 72016

501-472-6132

III. EFFECT ON EMPLOYEES

The postmaster was reassigned on July 31, 2010. The noncareer postmaster relief (PMR) may be separated from the Postal Service. No other Postal Service employee will be adversely affected.

IV. ECONOMIC SAVINGS

The Postal Service estimates an annual savings of \$ 109,808 with a breakdown as follows:

Postmaster Salary (EAS-16, No COLA)	\$ 73,757
Fringe Benefits @ 33.5%	\$ 24,709
Annual Lease Costs	<u>+ \$ 29,493</u>
Total Annual Costs	\$ 127,959
Less Annual Cost of Replacement Service	<u>- \$ 18,151</u>
Total Annual Savings	<u>\$ 109,808</u>

V. OTHER FACTORS

The Postal Service has identified no other factors for consideration.

VI. SUMMARY

The Postal Service has determined to close the Bigelow, AR Post Office and provide delivery and retail services by rural route service under the administrative responsibility of the Conway Post Office, located 13 miles away.

The postmaster was reassigned on July 31, 2010. If the office has a noncareer PMR, they may be separated from the Postal Service. No other employee(s) will be adversely affected. Post office workload has declined. Effective and regular service will continue to be provided by rural route service.

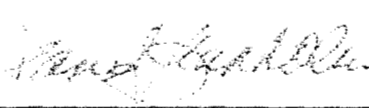
The Bigelow Post Office provided delivery service to 1,058 customers and 256 PO Box customers. The daily retail window transactions averaged 40. There are one permit mailers or postage meter customers.

There will no longer be a retail outlet in the community. However, delivery and retail services will be available from the carrier, alleviating the need to travel to a Post Office for service. The Postal Service will save an estimated \$109,808 annually. A disadvantage to some may be in meeting the carrier to transact business. However, it is not necessary to be present to conduct most Postal Service transactions.

Taking all available information into consideration, the Postal Service has determined that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and this final determination is warranted.

VII. NOTICES

- A. Support Materials. Copies of all materials upon which this final determination is based are available for public inspection at the Bigelow Post Office, Houston Post Office and Conway Post Office during normal office hours.
- B. Appeal Rights. This final determination to close the Bigelow Post Office may be appealed by any person served by that office to the Postal Regulatory Commission at 901 New York Ave NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20268-0001. Appeals must be received by the Commission within 30 days of the date this final determination is posted. If an appeal is filed, copies of appeal documents prepared by the Postal Regulatory Commission or the parties to the appeal will be made available for public inspection at Bigelow Post Office, Houston Post Office and Conway Post Office during normal office hours.



Dean J Granholm
Vice President of Delivery and Post Office Operations

06/28/2011

Date